

MILE END WEST PROJECT

PROGRESS REPORT FOR THE PERIOD

April 1, 1971 - March, 1972

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Project Title: Mile End West Project

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GENERAL:

The Mile End West Project is now entering the final six months of its present agreement with National Health and Welfare. Almost at the time of the formulation of this report, actions developed that indicated that the original objectives of the project are becoming realities. The development and the success of the Common Front recorded elsewhere in this report indicates that now that the members of the Greek immigrant population have attained a degree of community cohesiveness, stability and self-worth, they are more than willing to cooperate and recognize their interdependence with their French, English, Irish, Italian, and Jewish neighbours. This and other developments certainly indicate that the process outlined in the original submission is now proving successful.

PROGRESS MADE IN PAST FISCAL YEAR:

a) The Hellenic Parents and Guardians Federation now has legally chartered Parents' Associations in 24 schools in Montreal. By-laws have been prepared and submitted to Quebec for the umbrella body as well as for each of its member associations.

In the past year, the Parents Federation was faced with several major problems affecting the education of their children:

In June 1970, Park Extension parents heard unofficially that of the 740 children (mostly of Greek and Armenian descent) being bused to four schools in the Town of Mount Royal since 1967 due to overcrowded conditions in Park Extension schools, the 140 pupils attending Algonquin school would no longer be accepted there in September due to pressure from TMR parents who felt that the presence of immigrant children in their schools was hampering the education of their own children. The Greek parents were upset and requested a meeting with the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal and asked the latter to take no further action until the meeting. The PSBGM denied the rumours and promised to meet with the Parents Federation representatives as soon as possible. The Parents had waited over 6 weeks for the promised meeting when they noticed relocatable classrooms being erected in the Barclay School playground in Park Extension. Now the parents were incensed. An immediate meeting with PSBGM officials was demanded and granted. The parents had first-hand knowledge that in 1967, when the decision to transfer three streets in Park Extension into TMR's school district, TMR residents had opposed the decision vehemently in spite of their own decreasing school population.

The Algonquin School teachers had refuted the charges that the education of TMR children was suffering due to the presence of immigrant children in a brief to the Board. After several meetings and extensive use of Greek and non-Greek news media, the PSBGM agreed to allow children already enrolled at Algonquin School to continue, but to accept no new Park Extension pupils. The Parents were forced to accept this as a temporary solution in view of the fact that schools were opening in less than a week. However, negotiations have already started between the Parents Association of Park Extension and the PSBGM to find a more suitable and permanent solution.

Another area of major concern to the Parents Federation was the introduction of Bill 28 in the National Assembly. Representatives were sent to all discussions and debates held on this subject by the PSBGM and other groups. The Federation requested its legal advisor to confer with various educators and draw up a complete analysis of Bill 28, related legislation and its repercussions. This document was compiled discussed at length in Federation meetings and finally distributed to all Greek parents. Time was procured from a Greek open-line radio program for further discussion, and clarification and several information meetings were held. In addition, a brief outlining the concerns of Greek parents was prepared and set to the Minister of Education.

At present, the Federation has just completed a study with local non-Greek committees and the Montreal Teachers Association on the problems of inner-city schools (attended by a large majority of their children). A brief outlining their findings and recommendations is now being finalized for presentation to the PSBGM.

The Parents Federation has also been actively involved in Greek cultural and folkloric demonstrations in the past year. In addition to the Greek language and history classes which are still being attended by close to 3,000 elementary school children on weekday afternoons or Saturday mornings, Christmas plays and presentations were held in most of the schools where children performed for audiences averaging 200 to 500 persons.

On March 25th, the anniversary of Greek independence from the Turks, the Parents Federation rented two large halls to house the 3,500 parents who turned out to see their children perform in plays, poems and in the folkloric songs and dances. There were tears in the eyes of many spectators.

b) The Park Avenue Day Care Centre has now been in operation for more than a year. There are presently 42 three to five year olds enrolled with a waiting list of 90. Although there was much frustration at the outset due to the inability of the Greek staff to work effectively with the non-Greek staff because of cultural differences in rearing children, regular staff meetings, replacement of one staff member and in-service training, this problem is now non-existent.

The Parents Committee of the Day Care Centre is becoming very active and shows signs of readiness and willingness to take over full responsibility for the management of the Centre without delay. The possibility of incorporating the Parents Committee to make this possible is presently being explored as well as the feasibility of amalgamating with another local Day Care Centre which has ample space but no community base and is therefore not being used to full capacity.

The Parents Committee is presently preparing to meet with Quebec officials to request that their per diem subsidy be augmented in line with increases to other Day Care Centres in Montreal. It is interesting to note that prior to MEWP, the thought of meeting with "authorities" would have shocked or petrified Greek immigrants.

The Park Avenue Day Care Centre's case histories reveal many exciting successes with problems such as a child who would not or could not speak on admission who now speaks readily; several overly aggressive children have learned to play more and fight less; children who could not be toilet-trained at home have completely overcome their difficulties shortly after arrival.

A Sesame Street Program was set up several months ago and has received excellent response. This summer, it is hoped that with the help of Université de Montréal's Education Department, an intensive but specially-designed French program will be initiated.

c) The Medical Clinic mentioned in our previous report is no longer feasible in view of the introduction of medicare and Bill 65. However, the Project continued to work with local hospitals concerning the handling of Greek patients and acted as a referral centre.

d) Echo--continued to play a key role in communicating the activities of the various local organizations and dispersing basic information to the Greek immigrant population. All new legislation concerning education, consumer protection, unemployment insurance, language issues in Quebec were dealt with in detail as was Canada's Multiculturalism Policy. Articles on tenants rights, citizens rights, in case of bailiff seizures, and other similar legal problems were covered. One page per issue was devoted to a series on the history of Québec in the Canadian context.

e) Information and referral remains as a basic service of the Project. Some agencies have adapted their services to function more effectively as a result of contacts with MEWP. Laws and services available are still being translated and dispersed to the community.

f) The Hellenic Canadian Labour Association was incorporated in May 1970. It presently has a membership of over 400 and provides services to more than 150 persons each each week, including non-Greeks.

The Workers Association's services are many and varied. In addition to advocating and/or interpreting services for cases related to unemployment, minimum wage, workmen's compensation, etc, the Workers

provide job placement services to immigrants either of accompanying them to their Manpower Office or by sending people out into the community to locate available jobs which are then made known to persons on their lists of unemployed.

At present, there is one person available all day who completes income tax forms for Greek immigrants who would otherwise be forced to pay upwards of \$5.00 to local travel agents for this service. The same is true in the case of unemployment insurance benefit report cards.

Much work has been done to help the immigrants benefit more from their unions by providing interpreters for meetings held with employees. In several cases groups of workers who were working under adverse conditions and wished to be unionized were directed to the proper channels.

Besides translating and making available labour laws and related information, the Workers Association has made extensive use of Greek radio programs to disseminate vital information. e.g. Following one such discussion concerning the unemployment insurance entitlements of pregnant women, the Association was swamped with close to 100 telephone calls on that subject the following day.

A problem of major concern to the Labourers Association is the 10,000 or more illegally landed Greek immigrants who are under constant pressure and become easy prey to exploiters who force them to work for ridiculous wages. Having no other means of support they accept adverse working conditions after displacing legally landed immigrants or Canadians who dared to complain or report the exploiter. The Association is presently attempting to generate support for a request for amnesty which would solve the problems of all workers affected.

g) Legal Aid- this service has now been expanded from legal advice to full legal service. Arrangements were made with the Bar Association of Quebec to have a legal aid lawyer provided twice weekly for immigrants in the area who are eligible for free legal aid but cannot be handled at the Central Office due to a lack of interpreters. MEWP provides the office space and interpreters. Cases requiring legal action are referred to practicing lawyers for free service. Here again, MEWP provides translators. To date, we have not been too successful in communicating the availability of this service to Italian and Portuguese immigrants, as they are not responding nearly as much as the Greeks.

An interesting phenomenon of the legal aid service has been the heavy preponderance of divorce and separation cases among Greek immigrants. Local Greek-speaking lawyers were consulted and corroborated this fact in their own practises. MEWP recently approached a Greek psychiatrist at the Allan Memorial Institute who displayed an

interest in helping us develop a research program around this problem with other specialists. The results of this study could result in family-life conferences aimed at examining and bridging the cultural gap faced by families who grow up with one set of values and are dumped unprepared into another.

h) Integration in general has been happening slowly but surely. The various groups which grew out of MEWP have not begun to coordinate their efforts with those of non-Greek groups around common problems.

This progress may be related to the fact that last fall the Board of Management of the International YMCA made a concerted effort to encourage community participation. Five seats were allotted to MEWP groups who in turn elected their representatives. This has been effective in bringing the Greek groups closer to the local non-Greek groups and giving them a chance to influence the direction of the Branch's orientation while understanding many aspects of the community in which they live which they previously ignored.

Last week a common front of Greek, English, and French community groups succeeded in obtaining much needed playground space and monitors for after-school and Saturday recreation programs. Previous efforts by individual groups had been fruitless although the lack of such facilities has existed for years. This battle was a landmark in the work of MEWP as the groups realized that they could communicate across language barriers, that they did have common interests and problems, and that working in isolation, they could not solve many problems.

i) French Integration Program was initiated as an attempt to help local Greek immigrant become better acquainted with their environment. A group of 40 immigrants are presently receiving French language training. This will be followed by visits to typical Quebecois sites to introduce them to the Quebec culture and group discussions centering on that culture and its significance to immigrants. The group will then be encouraged to meet with francophone Quebecers to discuss common concerns and interests, exchange experiences, and interests, exchange experiences, and ultimately develop an open line of communication.

WORK PLAN FOR NEXT FISCAL PERIOD:

a) Major efforts will be made to assist local associations of the Parents Federation in furthering their involvement in the problems of inner-city schools and encourage a greater sensitivity to the problems of immigrant children and their integration into the Québec milieu.

Parents associations will be formed in local high schools as well.

Work will continue with the Federation to encourage further demonstrations of the Greek culture to promote greater exchange in keeping with Canada's multiculturalism policy.

b) Work will continue with Parents Committee of Day Care Centre to finalize their taking over complete responsibility for its management. This Association will also be encouraged to form an affiliation with the Parents Federation and to recognize the necessity for coordinated efforts in seeking solutions to the problems of immigrant children at all levels.

c) The Labour Association will be assisted in the development of expanded services. More lectures and media programs will be encouraged to disseminate essential information.

d) Echo will continue in its present form with its future dependent on the priorities established by the MEWP component groups.

e) Efforts will be made to communicate the availability of legal aid services beyond the Greek community to better serve Italian and Portuguese immigrants in the area.

f) Family-life education program will be established with the help of qualified Greek specialists to promote a deeper understanding of the social and psychological forces that are presently destroying too many Greek immigrant families.

g) Greater use of available recreation facilities will be promoted. Also, Greek organizations will be encouraged to continue their efforts with non-Greek groups to improve and augment recreational facilities and playgrounds in the area.

Parents Federation will be assisted in developing Day Camps, and cultural activities during the summer months.

h) The formation of a coordinating council and/or editorial board from local organizations will be formed if Echo is to continue.

i) Continue to promote the necessity for understanding and integration into the Québec milieu.

j) Encourage further coordinated efforts or common community problems between Greek groups and non-Greek groups with similar interests and problems. Explore possibility of forming local tenants association.

k) Continue to encourage volunteer participation in all aspects of the Project's activities.

l) Research local residents to evaluate degree of MEWP's impact on the community.

Budget Requested--April 1, 1970 - September 30, 1972

1. Project personnel

Director	5,000	
Community Workers (4)	13,050	
Secretary	2,500	
Fringe Benefits	1,100	
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		21,650

2. Travel & Sustenance	500	
		<hr/>
		500

3. Office Expenses

Supplies	500	
Rentals(equipment)	240	
Telephone	200	
		<hr/>
		940

4. Other

Professional charges (supervision)	500	
Rental of Office Space	500	
Administrative charges (bookkeeping,accounting etc.)	250	
		<hr/>
		1,250

TOTAL BUDGET	24,340.00
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